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**Participant Training Project
For Europe (PTPE)
Country Report—Albania
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BACKGROUND

PURPOSE OF TRIP

The purpose of this trip was to conduct an on-site assessment of the results of the Participant Training Program/Europe (PTPE) training activities. The site visit is intended to expand on the knowledge collected in the written evaluation instruments (Mid-term, Exit, and Returnee Questionnaires) that have been completed by the participants. The site visit to Albania involved returnees from the PIET program, as well as from the competitive small grant programs (Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Johns Hopkins University, the Soros Foundation, Council for International Programs, East-West Management Foundation, University of Pittsburgh, USTTI) and Inter-agency Agreements (Department of State and USIA).

The PTPE evaluation methodology is designed to assess the process and quality of the training programs as well as to measure impact of training on a scale of increasingly substantive measures. The scale starts with impact at the individual level, assessing personal changes (English skills, confidence, etc.) and career impacts (job, salary, etc.). The next level is focused on the organizational impact—ability to perform a given job better, to train others, to improve performance in an organizational structure and/or to change organizational policy. The highest levels of impact are for sectoral and national policy change and effectiveness. The analysis of the data collected will be integrated into the data from completed Returnee Questionnaires and incorporated into the contractor and annual reports.

SCHEDULE

The site visit to Albania was conducted from November 18 to November 22, 1996, in conjunction with a country visit from Patricia Bekele, USAID/W Special Projects Manager for PTPE. Aguirre representatives, John Gillies and Tom Judy, conducted the returned participant interviews. Meetings were held with the USAID/Representative, Dianne Blane, USAID/Project Development Officer, Cameron Pippitt, Matty Thimm, PIET representative, and returned participants. All interviews were held in Tirana in view of the short time frame and location of the returnees. A total of 52 participants were contacted, from PIET, Soros, Council for International Programs, USTTI, East-West Management Institute, Department of State, and Thomas Jefferson University Hospital.

TRAINING IN THE COUNTRY STRATEGY

Training has been a cross-cutting support mechanism for USAID/Albania. Prior to the recent re-engineering of the mission portfolio, training was not formally oriented to strategic objectives but rather took advantage of targets of opportunity and project nominations to identify participants and

training activities. To the extent that project requests were integrated into project activities and consistent with the project goals, the training was contributing to overall objectives.

As the mission has started implementing the Strategic Objectives planning structure, a results team approach has been used to identify mission training options. The emphasis is now on specific orientation to Strategic Objectives and, on the implementation level, with preferences toward group training rather than individual training programs. The mission plans to maintain adequate flexibility to respond to targets of opportunity.

On the implementation level, the PIET training contract has been used as a support mechanism for managing training financed by other contracts. This has provided both a standard level of quality in terms of orientation, processing, and support, and also has provided some access to the training skills of the staff.

FINDINGS

OVERVIEW

The legacy of the PTPE program in Albania will be positive. In the period since 1992, a total of approximately 160 Albanians have received some form of training financed under the PTPE program. This includes training provided by 12 contractors, including PIET, Institute for International Education, Harvard University, Soros Foundation, Johns Hopkins University, Salzburg Seminar, USIA, MCID, New York University, USTTI, East-West Management Institute, and the Council for International Programs. The training programs vary considerably, both in the nature and length of training and in the program management. The programs range from the very short term activities of the Salzburg Seminar (1–2 weeks in Austria) and the slightly longer term (2–4 weeks) programs offered by PIET, to 3–4 month intensive study programs (Johns Hopkins) and on-the-job training (CIP). The range of activities includes seminars, conferences, observation tours, formal short courses, customized courses, internships, and academic programs.

The training has influenced people in both the private and public sectors and has contributed to a strengthening of the free market system and democratic processes across a number of sectors. For some, it has provided the professional tools to work more effectively in a free market world. For others, it has offered insights into new possibilities and new approaches to their work. For all, the training has increased their understanding of the operations of democratic, free market systems in the U.S.

The Albanian participants are well satisfied with their training programs and are grateful for the opportunity. The programs have generally selected qualified individuals and provided useful training experiences. In many cases, the benefits of training accrue not only to the individuals involved, but also to their employers through improved job effectiveness.

The results of training in Albania were in some ways unique. Albania had been under an isolated and very individualistic communist dictatorship for decades. This limited exposure to experience in any other country resulted in a weak legal and regulatory framework in many areas. The result is an interesting combination of both a need to create fundamental legal frameworks from scratch in many areas, and a willingness to do so that is enthusiastic by the standards of the region. Therefore, an unusually large number of returned participants report having worked on legal, policy, and regulatory frameworks in their area of expertise. In many ways, this is a high level impact because it addresses a fundamental condition for progress. On the other hand, the existence of a legal or regulatory structure does not actually change activities on the ground or organizational behavior. The implementation of new frameworks to achieve change in target organizations is the appropriate focus for continuing project interventions, in which training is an essential input.

The examples and issues presented in this report illustrate a number of ways that training can be, and has been, effective. They also illustrate some principles of training design and management that can

be applied to continue to strengthen this program and to achieve the full potential impact. The report also includes specific suggestions from participants and the Aguirre evaluator about how to improve the training activities. This discussion is presented not to imply problems, but rather to encourage the growth of the program to achieve a higher degree of impact at both the individual and the programmatic levels.

TRAINING UTILIZATION AND IMPACT

The impact of the training program has been very positive. All of the training has been useful to the participants and many have been able to apply their ideas to affect policies and laws. The situation in Albania is unique even among the countries of the CEE. In many of the programmatic areas, there is little or no established base or expectations. Many are working from a clean slate. The attitude of many of the people in Albania is also unique in that there is a strong predisposition to making changes. There is probably less overt resistance to new ideas from the West than in most other countries because so many of the changes are not challenging established procedures or entrenched bureaucracies. The program has identified and supported some impressive individuals who are or will be influential in the country. In doing so, it has created a small foundation for change and a better understanding of how a free market democracy works. In many instances, the participants have acquired specific knowledge about their professions or approaches to solving common problems that have initiated innovative solutions to common social or economic problems.

One of the core values of all of the U.S. based training, of whatever duration or content, is exposure to the U.S. business and political culture and lifestyle, as well as to different ways of thinking about and addressing common problems. This point was stressed by many of the returned participants. As one person explained, “just being in the United States is a kind of training.” The western culture, with fundamental roots in a democratic market economy, offers the participants from CEE countries insights into different approaches and possibilities. Exposure to Americans as a people is also important for facilitating international business and professional relations. Participants see and assess different ways of looking at problems and of approaching solutions. These kinds of insights and experiences seldom show up in specific “impacts” or actions, but rather may have a general influence in how participants react to new challenges. Participant training is uniquely suited for this purpose. It is this general impact of a new perspective that participants carry with them when they change jobs or careers—and which continues to be useful in all future work.

The impact of this exposure to the U.S. is greatly increased in the case of Albanians. The unique isolation of Albania from any other country, and even within the country itself, argues strongly for the need for a remedy of exposure. In other CEE countries, U.S. training has been important for breaking established ways of thinking. In Albania, the country appears to be already convinced that their old ways of doing things were not effective. Their challenge is to find new models and to carefully select and implement the appropriate ones. Participant training is a useful tool for this purpose when it is well integrated with in-country technical advisors.

In terms of direct application of knowledge and ideas gained in training programs, many if not most of the participants have been able to directly use the new ideas to influence even legal structures and formal organizational procedures. Most participants have also shared the knowledge and experience with co-workers either on an informal basis or through more formal training activities.

In some programs the training could be immediately and productively applied with the current organization. The key factors in these cases were (1) the training was concrete and specific to the participant's immediate job requirements; and (2) the participant's responsibilities reflected existing organizational priorities with management support. In these cases, the improved job performance of an individual could be implemented without significant constraints and could benefit the organization as a whole. In a few cases, the training was structured around operational teams in a target organization, which created a critical mass of managers and technicians with a common vision for the organization complemented with training and goal.

In all cases, direct utilization of training to initiate change or fundamentally affect job performance increases to the degree that the training is:

- highly focused on specific job or professional requirements;
- planned in the context of specific organizational (employer) objectives;
- supported by in-country technical advisors; and/or
- is longer term and more substantive in nature.

The traditionally, and historically challenging part of participant training is to design *training activities* to transfer relevant and concrete skills (and knowledge and motivation) that can be applied in the place of work. The PTPE training program has been reasonably successful in this area, although some improvements are possible in some programs. A larger, less traditional challenge is to structure *training programs* as a strategic intervention focused on outcomes—to achieve broader organizational, sector, or policy objectives. In order to achieve these broader goals, the focus of training programs must be raised above that of the individual participant or the single training event to the level of programmatic structure, objectives, and defined outcomes. A discussion of these issues and opportunities for achieving a broader impact are included in the final section of the report.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- All of the participants were very pleased with their programs and were appreciative of the opportunity to visit the U.S. For most, this was their first trip to the U.S. There were very few specific problems identified.
- Programs should train teams within a given target organization to create a common understanding of problems and solutions and to create a support

structure for change. (This has been done in several instances in Albania and has worked very well.)

- The training programs in the U.S. are more useful than training programs in European countries. The training approach in Europe is heavily oriented to lecture, theory, and rote learning while U.S. training is more oriented toward practical application using adult learning methodologies.
- U.S. training programs introduce useful life skills, like negotiation, mediation, brainstorming, role playing.
- Participants want to have concrete activities with focused training in their area of interest. The majority of the participants are working in technical fields where an overview exposure to ideas or theory needs to be followed by in-depth review of specifics. In general, the programs which allowed participants to spend more time focusing on specific professional issues had a more direct and concrete impact on job performance.
- The training objectives must be clearly understood and well defined from the start, on the part of both the participant and the training organization. Organizations need to spend the time to really understand the needs so that inappropriate placements do not happen.
- It is very important for people to actually visit the U.S. and see the different ways of doing things. This viewpoint was expressed by virtually every person interviewed—that one cannot really understand the depth of the differences without experiencing them.
- Follow-on support is important. In some cases, this follow-on is provided by project activities and technical advisors in Albania.
- USAID should arrange and facilitate networking and regular contacts among returned participants who studied in the same area. Networking is a relatively low cost means of extending the impact of training.
- USAID should make participant agreements with the individuals, employers and other stakeholders to assure that the participants return to have a job for some minimum period of time in order to implement the training.
- Host families should be provided whenever possible and should be adequately oriented to having CEE visitors.

HIGHLIGHTED PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES

Leila Gjini, Chief of Cabinet, Ministry of Health. Ms. Gjini attended a course at the International Law Institute on international procurement and one on evaluation of infrastructure programs. A total of 16 people from the Ministry of Construction attended this program. Ms. Gjini is responsible for procurement and contract management at the Ministry. Upon return from the program, she worked on the World Bank team developing the new law on public procurement. (Previously, there was no legal structure for public purchases.) She recommends sending a group of people working on the same project so that they will all share a common approach. She believes that these programs are “really important for Albania. It prepares us for what is coming—for the future. We can go to Europe and other countries, but the philosophy in the U.S. is very different—it is much more practical and pragmatic. It is aimed at getting results.”

Klement A. Dymi, MD, Epidemiologist with the Ministry of Health (PIET). He also received a Humbert Humphrey Fellowship in 1995. Dr. Dymi attended a short course in epidemiology at CDC. This was a very important program for Albania, because public health was not even a recognized discipline as recently as 1992. There was simply no functioning system of public health in the country. Almost half of the public health care centers had been destroyed in the revolution. At that time, the basic health statistics were very poor quality and analysis was rudimentary. In many areas, even the basic data was not collected. “I gained much confidence in my own professional knowledge and learned what a public health system should be.”

The progress in this area has been impressive. Now, they have restored over 500 public clinics to full operation, have initiated a health insurance system, and are worked to improve the quality of care. The epidemiology procedures are much improved and they are now working to improve the collection of health data. Dr. Dymi was a member of the working group developing the law on public health, which included an emphasis on family physicians and preventative health treatment.

Pandeli Topalli, member of the environmental committee at the Ministry of Health (PIET). Mr. Topalli attended a short program in Oregon and Washington that provided a practical orientation to general environmental problems associated with economic development. They studied a range of issues, including organization of environmental organizations, linkages from the federal government to cities and states, legal structures, and implementation procedures. He attended the course with the other five Committee members who represented different districts.

He learned a lot new ideas, but has not been able to put some into practice. He believes that they need to make the environmental committee independent of the Ministry, but things are moving in exactly the opposite direction. One of the most important activities he saw in the U.S. was how public participation can directly influence development plans and make sure that they are responsive to public needs. The importance of the program was that it gave some hope that progress is possible, as they saw in Oregon that salmon could live again in formerly dead rivers. He suggests that the program also show areas with current problems rather than only the most successful programs. They had expected to send a second group for follow-up training, but this never happened.

Admir Salillari, faculty of electrical engineering at the Technical University (USTTI). Mr. Salillari attended three courses in the U.S. in 1993 dealing with telecom manufacturing, cable products, and cable and wireless technology. He has been with the engineering faculty and is now a consultant and a teacher at the Institute for Management and Communications. The programs were very valuable to him, both as an industry consultant and a teacher, because he gained a broader view and understanding about where the telecommunications industry is headed. He learned about what the important new technologies would be in the coming years. "It is important to know that in 1991 we had nothing—no equipment and only one computer in the entire department of electronics. We had to start from scratch."

Vojsava Progri, Statistics Department, Ministry of Labor (PIET). Ms. Progri attended a five week program at the Bureau of Labor Statistics that was coordinated with two BLS technical advisors working in Albania on a wage statistics survey. Both specialists in her two person department have taken the same course, which had a challenging mix of theory and practice. She had to study in the hotel at night just to keep up. They were starting at a very low level because at the time of the revolution, the statistics program in Albania was in complete disarray. Before 1992, all government data and statistics were state secrets.

Since returning, she has published several major studies and a book on national statistics. The first publication was on labor force statistics in Albania, sources of unemployment and comparison of real wage growth compared to CPI from 1991–93. (She sent drafts to BLS and to the Prime Minister.) The second publication on labor markets in Albania expanded the data level to balance sheets of enterprises and analyzed patterns of employment in the public and private sectors. This was published in two languages. The third publication addressed wage differentials in public and private sector companies by occupational group. In this study, she applied a classification of occupations developed from the BLS and ILO systems. The Ministry had created a commission to classify employment and occupations for internal use by the Ministry of Labor. The most recent publication addressed the impact of new health and social security programs on the structure of wages in occupations covered by the new laws. Since returning, they have also trained regional representatives from all 36 districts.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Gilbert Galanxhi, Director, Public Relations

Griselda Kastrati, Director, Economic Integration (formerly in Protocol Dept.)

Bujar Bala, Director, European Union Relations

Fillakti Piro, Director, United Nations Liaison

These participants were part of two large groups of foreign service officers trained under the PTPE program. The first group was trained under the 1994 Department of State training program and the second training was arranged directly through PTPE. These participants were all from the second training activity, which consisted of two weeks of training in Tirana followed by four weeks in Washington, DC, and one week in New York. The training consisted of lectures and practice in

diplomatic skills and analysis, management challenges in establishing and running an embassy, and negotiation.

The participants in both training programs have reached important levels in the Albanian foreign ministry and consider the training to be very useful for both their job performance and career development. While the overview of topics was useful, the participants found the presentations relating to their own job requirements to be most applicable. In some areas, such as public relations, the foreign ministry had no previous system or procedures. As the director of this office put it, “this is a new invention for Albania. We are all learning as we go—both the government and the press.” All of the participants emphasized the importance of the negotiation skills course, based on the book, “Getting to Yes.” The core concept of seeking a “win-win” outcome was new to them. They also stressed that the ideas of teamwork, problem-solving orientation, and brainstorming techniques have been very useful.

The group suggested that Albania’s situation was unique enough that they needed more extended time, perhaps with more case studies and simulations, than trainees from other countries. They also suggested a different program balance, to increase the amount of concentrated effort in job specific areas (with small groups or internships) and reduce the amount of general exposure training. They also suggested that the program provide core reference books rather than a book budget. Given the tight schedule, they found it difficult to review and select books from the huge number available.

Society for Democratic Culture

Miranda Gace, Director
Anika Dede

The participants were part of a group of seven Albanians from seven of the 33 branches of the SDC. The three-week program consisted of theory and practical training at the University of Illinois, training in organizing and managing local associations, and observing Chicago primary elections. They also visited polling places on election day, various NGOs involved with local elections, foundations, state offices, and schools with civic education programs.

The participants were struck by the civility of the U.S. election and how candidates show respect for their opponents, the calm of the election, and the strong citizen involvement. They have used many ideas and materials that they learned. Upon return, they initiated a series of newspaper advertisements about civility in elections and the public’s responsibility to strengthen the process. They prepared several posters to encourage popular participation based on U.S. posters (e.g., vote for your future, and your children’s future), which were very well received. They have also proposed establishing pilot civic education programs in two schools to promote democracy and citizen responsibility. With assistance from UNDP, they are initiating a program of teaching NGOs how to conduct public relations campaigns—another idea that they learned about on the training program. They are distributing texts and materials to NGOs, local governments, and universities.

The society monitored the May elections and identified various irregularities, which made them the target of attacks and pressure from the government and some of the parties, even extending to threats to arrest them. In the October elections, the government reduced their coverage by requiring a minimum age for observers that eliminated most of the student observers.

Their suggestions for improving the program were the following:

1. hire more professional interpreters; their interpreters argued with participants about what they should say, and even participated in the discussions themselves;
2. spend two or three days with a single NGO rather than having so many short visits; this would enable them to learn more about the daily activities of the organizations; and
3. encourage a broader range of lecturers; their program had only one person giving all of the lectures, which was not enough for a broad vision.

The participants believe that the training program in the U.S. was an important element in their professional and personal development. As Ms. Gace said, “Just the fact of being in the U.S. is a training experience. It gave us a vision for the future.”

Lindita Bushi, Assistant Director of Chemical Engineering Dept. University of Tirana (East West Management Institute). Dr. Bushi attended a 4-month program in Denver International Center with 10 other participants from CEE countries. The other participants were from a broad range of disciplines, none of whom were engineers. She worked at the FDA research center, conducting research in a drug used in fisheries, and attended classes at both Denver University and University of Colorado. She was also able to visit many companies and organization. She brought back many documents, materials, and studies.

Upon return, Dr. Bushi published several articles on issues of environmental pollution in Albania, including an article on pesticides. She also managed a Soros funded project on the determination of pollution impact in industrial and chemical factories, which resulted in a seminar and publicity through the TV and radio.

Dr. Bushi was enthusiastic about the program. “This was one of the best experiences of my life. Here, we just study and read, but in the U.S. I was able to work with other professionals. I made many friends and professional mentors. I have also changed my way of teaching since being in the U.S. I regularly teach chemical engineering, process control, and food chemistry. Now I try to use more open communications, to be more friendly and helpful to the students. I use new teaching methods that I learned in the U.S.” Dr. Bushi has applied for a Fullbright Scholarship to work in the environmental practices in the food industry.

Alma Cico, Director of the Health Insurance Institute (formerly with the MOH finance department). Ms. Cico is the director of the newly established health insurance program, which is the compulsory

public health insurance for all citizens. Her staff includes 32 people at the headquarters and offices in each of the 36 districts with a total employment of 250 people. Currently the program only reimburses for drugs and general practitioner work, but are extending it to hospital care.

Ms. Cico had originally planned a six month program, but her appointment as director of the new health insurance institute resulted in splitting the program into two trips. The first portion was for two months in 1995, split among a health financing course in Boston, a week at the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Insurance Company in Vermont, a course in Baltimore on financial management in health, and visits to health organizations in Washington, DC, and Baltimore. The second trip, in 1996, was a two-month program at the Harvard School of Public Health with two other Institute staff.

The program was very valuable and directly relevant to her new duties. She was able to learn from their mistakes as well as their successes. One of the first activities upon return was to establish an information system that provided accurate and relevant data for management decisions. The programs covered a range of relevant topics about finance, personnel management, etc. She believes that the Harvard program or similar training programs are needed by many people at the Institute to develop a broad knowledge of the health insurance industry at all levels in the Institute. This is a completely new area for Albania and most of the staff have only one year of experience. They need as much exposure to the industry as possible.

Klodian Shehu, Foreign Exchange Department, Treasury (formerly in the bank supervision department). Mr. Shehu attended a four week program in the states that combined courses at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago with visits to banks, other federal reserve banks, and commodity and stock exchanges in Chicago and New York.

The training was directly applicable to his job, particularly the specific procedures and process in conducting bank examinations on site. He learned about the importance of adequate preliminary work to scope out the assessment before going to the exam and how to work with bank officials to implement the findings. He also gained hands-on experience in the valuation of loans and analyzing reserve requirements against bad loans. Although the program was directly relevant to his position at the time, this “fast-track” young banker was transferred (promoted) to the foreign exchange department upon return and the knowledge is not directly relevant to his current responsibilities.

Albanian–American Enterprise Fund

Greta Angjeli, Vice Director of Budget
Liljiana Bashari, Chief, Fiscal Information Unit

These participants were selected for a customized joint training program when they were working as colleagues at the Treasury, Ms. Angjeli as a budget officer and Ms. Bashari in accounting and information systems. The program was custom designed by the USAID technical advisor to improve the systems for closer integration of budget formulation and execution. The program consisted of a three-week course in national budgeting at the International Law Institute and one week visiting state and local officials and budget offices. They learned how to set up an effective reporting system and

information system and how to establish and use a database linked to the budget formulation. They reviewed many different kinds and formats for budget reports. At the end of each lesson, they discussed how to apply the lessons in their own budget system.

The decision to send them as a team was very useful because they needed to understand each others' work and information needs in order to develop a close collaboration. The information unit, which was only established in 1995, is now an essential element in the budget system. Working together, they created a set of budget reports that met the needs of various levels of managers and worked at developing improved networking with the districts. Ms. Bashari developed a budget management program to use at the district level. They found the U.S. course to be particularly useful because it was practical. A similar program they attended in Europe was mostly theory based, and therefore less immediately applicable.

Mr. Agim Beluli, Director of WTO Department, Ministry of Industry, Transport, and Trade.

Mr. Beluli attended a two week training course in Washington, DC, on the regulation of utilities and monopolies. He was the only Albanian in a group of twenty international students. Mr. Beluli learned many new concepts about regulatory systems, techniques of administering regulations efficiently, and the overall goal of protecting the consumers. Since returning, he has worked on a proposal for the Council of Ministers for new regulatory laws to make Albanian regulation more compatible with international standards. He believes that it is very important to receive training in the US because of the practical approach taken by Americans, he feels that a two-week course is too short for the amount of material covered.

Dr. Artan Haxhiu, General Surgeon and Echo-Doppler Specialist, University Hospital Center (Thomas Jefferson University Hospital). Dr. Haxhiu attended a 12 week program in ultrasound technology at Thomas Jefferson. He was the only Albanian in the group. Professionally and personally, the program was the realization of a dream. He has studied in many other countries, but the U.S. is the best for his profession. His use of the ultrasound techniques has been limited because he does not have access to the new ultrasound machines at the hospital. However, he now uses ultrasound diagnostics techniques every day and has adapted the TJUH procedures for the university hospital.

Narin Panariti, Director of Program Implementation, Environmental Protection Committee MOH. Ms. Panariti attended a five-week program on environmental management at the University of Pittsburgh, IMDI School of Public Administration. The most important element of the course for her was the ideas of strategic thinking and SWOT analysis, but for the most part the program was not as high a level as she needed. She has shared the ideas with her colleagues and is now working on the committee to draft new environmental legislation.

Gani Deliu, Director Air Waste and Water Department, Environmental Protection Committee. Mr. Deliu attended an eight-week program in environmental protection at Colorado State University. The program was only a surface treatment of the issues, but, combined with subsequent training at the Environmental Management Training Center in Budapest, was important for his professional development. Mr. Deliu has organized seminars with inspectors from 12 Albanian Regional

Environmental Agencies and is writing a multi-country proposal to address the environmental problems created by uranium mines.

Orfea Dhuci, Vice Chief Executive Officer, Rural Commercial Bank. Mr. Dhuci attended a six-week training course at the American Institute for Management in Atlanta that focused on commercial bank management. The course was well organized and is the best he has attended. Since his return, he has written a manual for liability management for the bank, which has branches in 33 of 36 districts and 126 local agencies. He teaches bank management at the university and wrote a textbook on "Interest Rate Risk Management." As part of the training program, he received a subscription to the American Banking Association journal. He recommends increasing the book allowance to enable participants to collect more professional references.

University Hospital Center of Tirana

Dr. Mahdi Alimehmeti
Aferdita Tafaj
Natasha Celiku
Nevila Karuku
Gentiana Metuli

The hospital group proposed their own training program built around the core staff of this new organization. The program consisted of three weeks at the Wyatt Hospital in New Jersey, with each team member working in specialized areas. This group, composed of participants from 2–3 levels in the organization, clearly functions as a team. Asked to meet as a group and reinforced each other opinions. They are proud of their accomplishments and hopeful for progress in future.

Natasha Celiku worked in the statistics section studying indicators of diseases and a numerical coding system for record keeping. Since return, she has created patient files on computer using the master index system. She wrote an instruction manual about using the system, and trained her colleagues and others in two conferences. She now wants to promote use of this system at the Ministry of Health.

Nevila Karuku studied cost accounting for hospitals, a relatively new approach to analyzing hospital expenses in Albania. The techniques covered included patient cost calculations by 24 hour periods for comparative purposes, allocation of direct and indirect expenditures to departments using the "step-down" system, and a full codification of hospital accounts. She applied this new "chart of accounts" in the hospital upon return—it will be fully operational in January 1997. She needs to learn more about depreciation now to fully implement the accounting system.

Gentiana Metuli is responsible for purchasing for the pharmacy department. She visited many hospital pharmacies to learn about group purchasing of drugs, supplies, and equipment. Based on her experience, she has been proposing development of a group purchasing mechanisms for all public hospitals to achieve economies of scale. This is a major cost saving idea that will require policy changes at the Ministry to implement.

Aferdita Tafaj is the hospital administrator. She learned about budgeting, cost calculation for management purposes, and how costs are reflected and presented in the budget. She also learned to use computer tools for budget analysis and approaches to “outsourcing” of non technical services such as kitchen and custodial services.

Dr. Mahdi Alimehmeti is a pathologist and hospital administrator who followed the same program as Ms. Tafaj. In retrospect, he would have developed a separate program to get better coverage of the issues. In particular, he feels that they needed more management training. The biggest challenge they face is developing a business perspective for hospital management to allow effective competition with private hospitals.

FINDINGS BY TRAINING CONTRACTOR

PIET. The PIET program responds to the strategic priorities of the mission more directly than do the other programs. The USAID staff has a more direct role in managing this program, which provides short-term training (generally between 2–5 weeks) in identified priority areas. USAID/Albania has supported a mix of participants identified by the technical advisors as well as unsolicited proposals from individuals and organizations. The staff providing local management of the PIET program and administrative support to the other programs are knowledgeable, hard-working, and dedicated to the success of the project and to the well-being of the participants.

The PIET component is the most challenging part of the PTPE program. The component provides short-term training across a range of disciplines and sectors to people with widely different needs and objectives. The other components usually have a more narrow focus on an area of specialty and many fewer participants. PIET does not have the advantage of either specialist involvement in each technical area nor the mandate or resources to do full organizational development interventions. Under the circumstances, the program requires strong linkages with the in-country technical advisors and as much time for advance planning and follow-up review of TIPs as possible.

Continued improvement of this kind of short-term technical training program requires additional effort in developing a strategic and programmatic orientation to the training, and in understanding the organizational context of the training, relying on clearly defined objectives and careful planning to achieve as specific a focus as possible.

USTTI. The USTTI program places participants in industry training courses with U.S. communications companies, many of them industry leaders like CNN, MCI, AT&T. The training courses address highly specific technology applications. The USTTI program generally provides directly applicable training because it is supporting established corporate objectives and skill needs.

Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. The TJUH program is a three-month program in ultrasound technology, diagnosis, and treatment that combines course work and clinical work. The program is highly specific in terms of technology and introduces new applications of ultrasound technology to the participants. Use of the technology depends on the equipment available and the

support of hospital administrators and medical colleagues. The TJUH follow-up plan of continuing interaction with returnees, exchange of information and slides for teaching and diagnosis, and exchange of materials has not been implemented as planned.

Council of International Programs and East-West Management Institute. These programs arranged 3–4 month internships through their network of city-based international programs (Cleveland International Program, Denver International Program, etc.). Unlike some of the other programs, these internships place the participants in actual work situations. For some people and in some situations, this works very well. For others, the lack of a training structure limited the usefulness. The key is usually the capability and flexibility of the host organization. The placements were usually in groups of very mixed professions (engineers, social workers, medical workers, etc.) which most of the participants felt detracted from the potential value.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION OVERVIEW

The participant training activities in Albania have generally been well managed and have contributed to the professional development of the participants, in some cases have strengthened organizations, and have contributed to the development of new legal structures. The programs have been heavily oriented toward selection and training of qualified individuals and on planning of training events (whether for a single participant or a group). The quality of the training has generally been fairly good, although some programs have not achieved their potential. The results of this kind of short-term training has been more or less what can be expected: a few individuals have applied their knowledge and created innovative, effective new programs; most have achieved some improvements in job performance; and a few have made no discernable direct use of the training. All of the participants are very appreciative for the opportunity and believe that these programs are critical in developing a new mentality in the country. The training has all been in areas broadly supportive of the SEED Act objectives and consistent with the areas of emphasis in the mission programmatic objectives.

As the Mission moves toward formalizing the relationship of training outcomes to strategic objectives and intermediate results, a common framework for using training inputs will be helpful. This framework can expand the focus on training from the level of individual participants and training events to outcomes at the organizational or sector level. Increasing the measurable impact of training and its contribution to strategic objectives requires a structured focus on planning individual training in the context of defined organizational objectives. This usually requires a higher concentration of training—a critical mass—oriented to achieving a defined outcome. There is an important distinction between the traditional function of training in company management and the role in a development program. The traditional function of training is limited to the transfer of a few specific skills, knowledge, or attitude related to an individual's job performance. The purpose is the transfer of information and skills. In development programs, however, training is usually transformational rather than informational or solely skill related. Generally speaking, problems that warrant an investment from a development program are focused not solely on individual job performance, but rather a substantive change in the organizational or sector performance, policy, structure, and orientation.

Sometimes, as is the case in the CEE countries, the efforts are contributing to a wholesale transformation of economic and political systems. A truism in the corporate training profession is that over 80 percent of training programs are trying to solve problems for which the constraint is not in fact a lack of skills but rather a broader problem in corporate organizational structure, mission, incentives, relationships, or policy. This is very much the case for most training in development programs. A single training intervention will seldom be a sufficient input for substantive change.

TRAINING FOR IMPACT

The challenge is to structure training programs as a strategic intervention focused on outcomes—to achieve broader organizational, sector, or policy objectives. In order to achieve these broader goals, the focus of training programs must be raised above that of the individual participant or the single training event to the level of defined outcomes and objectives at the programmatic level. This kind of structure requires two major components—a defined outcome (not activity) and a critical mass sufficient to achieve that outcome. Some issues to consider are:

■ *Defined Objectives in a Clearly Defined Organizational Context*

The focus should be on organizational or institutional (sector) goals toward which individual activities and skills will contribute. Individuals work in the context of an organization, and organizations have a broader impact on society than do individuals. When the efforts of an individual are part of an organizational effort, the impact is magnified. Conversely, an individual's efforts can be muffled or lost if the organization through which he or she is working simply ignores the changes.

In a few, relatively rare cases, the individual and organizational goals are the same—to the extent that a single training intervention for an individual achieves the goal and influences organizational behavior. More often, an individual training program fits into a broader activity that involves other resources (technical advisors), other people in the organization (top management, supervisors, other participants), other organizations in the sector, other individuals in a profession, or other related training (a sequence of training activities around a given goal). Therefore, the training framework starts with a basic unit of analysis of the behavior changes needed at the organizational level and an organizational training plan addresses the skill, knowledge, and attitude constraints at all levels. When all of the key players in the organization have the necessary skills and knowledge focused on a common goal, a critical mass is achieved.

■ *Defining a Critical Mass*

Broader impact requires a broader focus of activities—a critical mass of training and other actions (including technical assistance) within an organizational framework or in an intra-organizational framework. The concept of critical mass is usually used loosely to refer to an undefined bunch of people. However, an effective critical mass is actually the *right* group of people to achieve the objectives depending on the nature of the industry, sector, and target organization. A critical mass depends largely on the context within which a given set of skills, or knowledge, will be used to achieve a defined outcome. At the individual level, the context determines the extent to which an individual's increased knowledge will effect the functioning of the organization. Two key factors in defining critical mass are organizational complexity and the technical complexity of the problem to be solved.

Organizational complexity is important because a more complex organization has multiple layers of managers with control over resources and decisions—and thus multiple levels of people who can

either obstruct or facilitate change. A highly complex organization, such as a government ministry or a large corporation, must have a constellation of supporting actions to achieve any change—top management must approve and support the change (with resources), middle managers must understand and encourage it (with resources and time), and technicians must understand how to implement it. A critical mass in this kind of organization includes people at all of these levels—a vertical slice of the organization—with the appropriate mixture of supporting knowledge, attitude, and skills. On the other hand, a small and simple organization, such as most PVOs, place control of resources and decisions in the hands of a few, or even one, person. Therefore, a critical mass to fundamentally affect the operations of a PVO may be a single person.

A critical mass for objectives that transcend a particular organization may be very different. Objectives that can only be achieved by the combined actions of many organizations must create a critical mass among the organizations (as well as a critical mass within each organization). For objectives implemented through PVOs, a critical mass may consist of a selection of PVO leaders. For other objectives that rely on professional attitudes, a critical mass may be created within a profession (such as the medical profession).

It is important to remember that the definition of the critical mass is not the same as design of the training plan. The training provided to each individual in the critical mass must be appropriate to his or her needs, interests, and job. In many cases, this may mean that individual members of a critical mass for a given objective will be trained separately or in sequence. In other cases, they may be trained as a team.

The technical complexity of the desired changes also affect the nature of the training intervention. Some changes can be achieved through new ideas and attitudes—the technical complexity is low. For other changes, such as creating new financing mechanisms at the municipal level, or developing telecommunications systems, the technical complexity is high.

The interface between technical and organizational complexity, in the context of the nature of the sector, helps to determine the nature of the intervention required to achieve the objectives. An example of alternative combinations is included below.

1. ***High organizational and technical complexity.*** This is by far the most difficult situation in which to plan and apply effective training programs for impact at the organizational level. The trainee is an individual working in a medium to large sized organization in which the technical challenges of applying new information are substantial. Organizations that fit into this category might include banks, investment houses, large manufacturing firms, and in some cases government institutions. To achieve both goals of training for impact (impact being change at the organizational level) the training cannot be limited to skills training for an individual. Rather, the training must be part of a broader context of organizational objectives, endorsed by organizational management. In the best circumstances, this only requires fitting the training into existing and highly specific goals (i.e.,

telecommunications, population projections). In others, it may require working with a critical mass of management, supervisors, and co-workers to develop such goals. (The role of technical advisors is often exactly this.)

Note: this organizational objective and context is not the same thing as asking an individual participant how he/she will use the training in the job.

The second part of an effective training program in this context is to transfer the level of technical detail appropriate to the job and to assure that all levels of the corporate implementation are met (conditions). The top management must understand and support the changes, mid-level management must understand how to implement the changes, and technical level personnel must have the competence to implement it. Isolated training events sometimes reach only one of these levels, and sometimes the training is not appropriate to the level. There are several common weaknesses found in training programs in this circumstance of high organizational and technical complexity. These are:

- The training is overview training of the top management, which empowers them to better assess priorities and objectives, but does not include follow-up support to actually implement the priorities.
- The training is overview training for mid or technical level people, who are not in a position to make or effectively influence the policy decisions. Or, even if the organization priority is clear, the training does not reach a level of focus and detail to enable them to actually apply the training—it only provides an overview. In these cases (which are the most common), the training has a general benefit of exposure to new ideas and systems, which is useful, but does not reach the potential.
- The training is technical and detailed, appropriate to the level of the individual, but is not appropriate to the context—there is no enabling environment because the initial preparatory work of needs assessments, management support, organizational consensus, etc. was not done. Therefore, the individual has skills or knowledge that are not valued in the organization, and thus which cannot be applied.

It should be noted that some training can provide skills that can be directly applied by an individual without any need for broader organizational support. These include the generic organizational development or personal management skills such as the management, setting job priorities, supervisory and people management skills, etc. Generally speaking, USAID is not providing this kind of training in U.S. programs, but rather may include it in in-country training.

The challenge of providing effective training for a complex organizational and technical situation can be met in a number of different ways. A common way for USAID programs is to coordinate the training with a development project that fields technical advisors in the organization. The technical advisors can perform the critical contextual work of establishing organizational objectives, determining training needs, and providing the technical expertise to help the organization implement the changes. In many such cases, the relationship of training and technical assistance is highly symbiotic. The U.S. training can substantially enhance the effectiveness of the in-country advisor by giving the counterparts the opportunity to actually see proposed new systems in action, thus validating the advisor's recommendations and building motivation. USAID Romania is moving in this direction with the recently completed SO and training plan exercises.

Without the advantage of a local technical advisor, training programs need to develop the conditions through substantive needs assessments and OD work with senior management. A purely training solution might include a sequential and evolving series of training interventions that move from management overview programs (to set priorities and objectives and develop management consensus on new directions) through increasingly detailed and technical training for other workers to implement the agreed upon objectives.

2. ***Low organizational complexity***, medium to low technical complexity. Target organizations in this situation may include NGOs, non-profit organizations, social service groups, and in some cases municipal governments may fall into this group. For most of these organizations, a handful of individuals make all important decisions and usually do most of the work, so organizational complexity is minimal. The key issues facing many of these groups are not technical, but rather are management or general activities such as fund raising, public relations, or kinds of services. For these kinds of programs, substantial benefits can be derived simply by exposure to innovative programs of others in the same field and relatively short discussions with colleagues about how they respond to similar challenges. The technical challenge of implementing these ideas is often not very great.

For these programs, a training program directed at the key decision-maker of the NGO that allows an overview of solutions to her problems and the opportunity to network may be enough. It would probably be useful in some cases to have the opportunity to do a follow-up session to address specific issues.

For programs with slightly more complex organizational dynamics and greater specialization, such as municipal governments, which also may have

more complex technical challenges, an effective approach can be a planned sequence of training opportunities. Initial overview training for the top decision makers can help define local priorities, while follow-on training programs can help to implement the top priorities. Issues that may require greater depth of training to actually implement innovative programs may include such areas as waste management, environmental management, or even citizen participation mechanisms. Training in combination with a specialist resident advisor can be very effective for these kinds of situations.

3. ***Low or no organizational context, low technical complexity*** but high concept importance. Examples of this would include community based home care systems, where the purpose is to influence sectoral or professional attitudes and activities rather than those of any particular organization. In these programs, the technical challenge of implementing the programs is less important than the ideas and motivating impact of a vision. For such groups, a one time program of exposure to many different but relevant U.S. programs is usually adequate. However, the accomplish the broader objectives of the USAID program, such training should be done in clusters to develop a critical mass of supportive voices in the profession.
4. ***Individual training and scholarships*** for broad skills development in which the specific organizational and technical context are unknown. This is training for individuals, usually in longer term academic programs. Training that is solely based on individual needs and interests and isolated from organizational context will seldom be effective to achieve short or medium term program objectives. However, such training develops a long-term resource for the country in a way that short-term training cannot. This kind of program can also have a fundamental impact on the participants' career and capabilities and even outlook on life.

The concept of "critical mass" is relevant to each of these kinds of training situations except for the individual training. (The task of developing a critical mass of college educated people in a society exceeds the capability of any donor program.) However, the application and definition of a "critical mass" is different in each case. In the first situation with a complex organizational structure, a critical mass usually consists of a vertical or horizontal "slice" of the organization, depending on the specific organizational goals. A vertical slice would address all of the organizational actors needed to achieve an organizational change—top management support and commitment of resources, middle management/supervisory support and understanding of the changes, and technical capability at the implementation level in all offices affected by the change. In this case, a critical mass is not a number but rather is a set of key relationships without which change does not happen. The absence of one or more of these elements is usually an effective

obstacle to change. In some cases, an external advisor or consultant may be an appropriate part of the critical mass.

In the second situation, a critical mass may consist of the number of small organizations (NGOs) needed to achieve a substantive sectoral or societal impact included in the USAID strategic objectives of democratic strengthening, provision of social services, or economic development. In the third situation, the critical mass is not organizations, but rather individuals strategically located across a profession to achieve a change in professional norms. In each case, the determination of a critical mass is at best an estimate. The important part for program planning is to recognize when and how the concept applies to a given training program.

This discussion is offered as food for thought as USAID/Albania continues to develop its program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The feedback from participants and program managers resulted in some suggestions to continue to strengthen the training program and integrate training into the Mission strategic plans. These include:

- Define program outcomes and objectives as clearly as possible, and then move to the focus on training events and individual participants. The basic unit of analysis is at the organizational level, with training for a critical mass of individuals within the organization to achieve defined goals.
- Define the critical mass required in each situation to achieve the desired outcome. This requires a combination of training expertise (from P.I.E.T.) and the technical expertise from the technical advisor teams. Group training programs for a team from a target organization (representing different levels in the organization) can be effective when the training provides a broad common framework followed by job specific training in each area.
- Well defined training objectives and training plans that accurately reflect the participants' interests and needs. This is a basic program development requirement that helps to avoid problems later on. It requires time and effort in the early stages. This is required for each individual in a group training mode as well as for each member of a critical mass.
- Integrate the training as much as possible into the Strategic Objective teams and the Technical Assistance contractor programs, which will provide a built in set of follow-on activities.
- Develop training agreements among participants, employers, training providers, USAID and PIET to clarify both the anticipated use of the training

and the nature of the training. TIPs need to be reviewed with this training agreement in mind. Well defined critical mass training programs might have joint or interrelated training agreements that commit a sequence of related events.

- Follow-on support to returned participants. This might include facilitated networking and alumni groups of participants working in the same professional area, facilitated networking with graduates of the same program in other countries in the region, provision of professional journals and information, some follow-on in country training, and possibly small grant support for projects. USAID can also arrange for short seminars or talks by short term consultants and visiting experts for returnees in that field of work. These are relatively low cost activities that can leverage USAID's established investment in 160 returned participants.

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